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Forest Panchayats

Agreements by Government with members of the forest panchayats.

*1871 *Q.*—Mr. A. Parasurama Rao: Will the hon. the Member for Revenue be pleased to state—

(*a*) whether the agreements entered into by the Government with the members of the Forest Panchayat were published in the Gazette for general information and if so, when ;

(*b*) whether such agreements contain any provision for the cancellation of the panchayat and if so, under what conditions ;

(*c*) whether it is a fact that without assigning any reason the Board of Revenue is given authority to cancel the agreement ;

(*d*) whether any and if so, what panchayats have been closed ;

(*e*) if so, what were the circumstances under which such drastic action was taken ;

(*f*) whether the panchayat has the liberty of opening the panchayat forest for free grazing provided they regularly pay the amount agreed to be paid to Government ;

(*g*) whether these panchayat members have no liberty of compounding offences committed in respect of such panchayat areas without the intercession of the forest and any other authorities ;

(*h*) whether the Government have any control over the monies that are collected by the panchayat so long as they pay up the amount fixed by Government under the agreement ;

(*i*) whether the fees levied from persons who commit offences in such panchayat areas are credited to Government or to the panchayat ;

(*j*) if they are credited to Government, under what authority ;

(*k*) whether there are two kinds of forest panchayats and, if so, what is the difference between the two ; and

(*l*) whether special kind of panchayats are working in North Arcot district ?

A.—(*a*) The answer is in the negative, but a copy of the standard form of agreement was laid on the table of the House on 27th February 1928 in answer to question No. 1577 asked by the hon. Member.

(*b*) & (*c*) The attention of the hon. Member is invited to clause 12 of the form of agreement referred to above.

(*d*) & (*e*) The Government have not the information.

(*f*) The Government can find nothing in the terms of the agreement preventing the panchayats from adopting such a course, provided they comply with the other conditions of the agreement regarding the nature and number of cattle to be admitted, period of closure, etc.

(*g*) Panchayats, which have been empowered under section 55 of the Madras Forest Act, can compound forest offences. Thirty-one panchayats have been so empowered

(*h*) The panchayats are, under the terms of the agreement, bound to maintain cash accounts of receipts and charges. These are inspected by the District Revenue staff.

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(*i*) To the Government, except in the case of two panchayats, Dalavoipatnam and Eraiyur which have been specially authorized to appropriate the compounding fees.

(*j*) Sections 55 and 66 of the Madras Forest Act.

(*k*) & (*l*) The Government are not aware of such a distinction nor of anything special in the constitution of panchayats in the North Arcot district.

Mr. G. Harisarvottama Rao :—" With reference to clauses (*b*) and (*c*), may I know whether the panchayats in carrying out the conditions are to be guided by the rules framed by the Government under chapter 3 of the Forest Act, or by the rules governing reserved forests ? "

* The hon. Sir Norman Marjoribanks :—" Notice, Sir."

Mr. G. Harisarvottama Rao :—" May I know, Sir, whether if any portion which was not hitherto in the reserved portion is now included in the panchayat area, the panchayat is free to exercise its jurisdiction under chapter 3 of the Act over that area ? "

* The hon. the President :—" That is asking for an opinion."

Mr. G. Harisarvottama Rao :—" With regard to the cancellation, Sir, the two clauses seem to conflict with each other. ' Failure to comply with any of the conditions above mentioned will be a ground for the cancellation of this agreement.' 'The Board of Revenue reserves the right of such cancellation, without assigning any reason whatsoever.' May I know whether the hon. the Revenue Member will revise them so that the doubt may be cleared ? "

The hon. Sir Norman Marjoribanks :—" The whole question is under consideration."

Mr. J. A. Saldanha :—" What is the statutory basis for these agreements ? "

The hon. Sir Norman Marjoribanks :—" Notice."

Mr. G. Harisarvottama Rao :—" May I know whether the Government have any intention of bringing in a law to regulate the conduct of forest panchayats, and take the vote of the House on that law ? "

The hon. Sir Norman Marjoribanks :—" There is at present no such intention."

Mr. G. Harisarvottama Rao :—" May I know what they are going to do in the matter ? What other measures are they going to take ? "

The hon. Sir Norman Marjoribanks :—" If the object cannot be obtained except by legislation then the Government will resort to legislation."

Irrigation

Investigation of the extension of the Kistna East Bank Canal.

* 1872 Q.—Mr. A. Kaleswara Rao : Will the hon. the Member for Revenue be pleased to state—

(*a*) whether any establishment was appointed during 1927–28 and 1928–29 for the investigation of the extension of the Kistna East Bank canal ;